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Keeping Better Records with Precision Agriculture

As tax time looms, it is often realized that a better method of keeping records is needed.

Fortunately, there are many software packages that are devoted to better record-keeping. On the farm, the ideal record-keeping software would be one that keeps up with more than just how much is bought and sold. A good software package should also track the “who, what, where, when, and how” of various farm practices and, most importantly, report the results of these activities.

Several “Precision Agriculture” software companies have now developed such integrated farm management applications in their programs. These software packages easily enable the producer, for example, to enter the cost of a given herbicide, where and how much was applied, what sprayer was used, who applied it, when it was applied, and ultimately what benefit it served. Such provides the farm manager a quick and easy way to keep up with site-specific, logistical information. The benefits of such may be two-fold.

First, it enables the farm manager to evaluate how effective a given practice is, relative to the return that it evolves. Integration of information that is specific to a given field or area within a field, such as fertilizer, seed, pesticides, or other inputs can be evaluated as to the productivity of that same area. Since these record-keeping methods allow the whole-farm management approach to be taken down to

a field by field or smaller scale, specific areas can be managed in a more efficient manner.

Secondly, it provides the farm manager an easy and quick method for tracking fertilizer and pesticide applications as required by various regulatory agencies. A renewed focus on inspections by these agencies has reinforced the value of simple and straight-forward record-keeping methods. When such is already integrated into a site-specific record-keeping package, the software enables this two-fold benefit.

The integration of various aspects of farm management into “Precision Agriculture” software packages is yet another way that technology can help producers to more effectively manage their farm operations. To learn more about the various packages, visit the upcoming National Farm Machinery Show at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville on February 12-15th. Precision agriculture software vendors will be on hand where one can easily compare the features of different software packages. To learn more about precision agriculture, attend the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture’s Precision Agriculture Conference on Thursday the 13th during the Farm Machinery Show. For more information on the conference or to find links to the precision agriculture software vendors’ websites, visit our webpage at www.bae.uky.edu/precag/.